1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria
Bison Horn Maria

615 618 114 advanced' areas further north, faced by Brahman ridicule of his culture, has more and more withdrawn into his shell and learnt to conceal the more intimate features of his tribal religion and culture.

174 61 618 Until we have before us the records of such systematized and widespread field-work it is impossible to form any reliable general theory of the origin of this god-grouping. My tentative view, so far as the Chanda Marias are concerned, for what it is worth, is that the god-grouping is a comparatively recent importation from their northern and western Gond (especially Raj-Gond) neighbours. As I have pointed out on pages 194-5, the Bastar Marias and Murias have neither god-grouping nor *chuddur penk*. I added that none of the Chanda Marias who had come to my camps in Bastar had these institutions. This may appear inconsistent with the definite proof of the existence at least of god-grouping among the Chanda Marias, as recorded from Lucie-Smith's time onwards, and verified by Bishop Wood and Rev. Patwardhan and in this tour of mine. But here again one must distinguish between the Chanda Marias of the hills above Lahiri and those of the plains and foothills. Those who came to my Bastar camps were all Chanda Hill Marias: those among whom god-grouping was verified were plains Marias. I camped for four days at Kuvakodi, a hill village high above Lahiri, and visited other hill villages close by both in Chanda and in Bastar. The Chanda Hill Marias are identical in culture with the Bastar Hill Marias, and like them had, at least at Christmas 1940, no god-grouping and no *chuddur penk*. The Hill Marias of Chanda in fact appear to be what the *Gazetteer*[1] describes as the Gaita sub-tribe of Gonds, and the speakers of the dialect referred to by it[2] and in the *Linguistic Survey* as Gattu, the language of the 'Kois or Gonds of the hills, especially in Sironcha', who 'are known as Gattu or Gotte Kois'; for it speaks of the Gaita Gonds as being 'almost alone in retaining the old Gondi custom, once universal, of building their village in two long barracks lying east and west facing each other about eighty feet apart' in which the married people dwell, while the bachelors, and in some villages unmarried girls also, have separate barracks. This description clearly fits the Hill Marias of Kuvakodi and adjacent hill villages, as it would do the villages of the neighbouring Hill Maria *parganas* of Bastar.

So we start with these, the most primitive of the Marias of Chanda, and find among them no trace of god-grouping or *chuddur penk*. Down the hill we come to Lahiri, and we find god-grouping (which, however, includes a three-god group absent among the Chanda and Adilabad Raj-Gonds), but, so far as I could ascertain, no *chuddur*

[1] *Chanda District Gazetteer* (Allahabad, 1909), pp. 97, 98.
[2] Ibidem, p. 73.

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria
Bison Horn Maria

penk corresponding in number to the number of gods of the god-group, and apparently no domestic cult except of the Departed. As you go northwards beyond Surjagarh or north-westwards towards Chand the Marias begin to understand the meaning of god-grouping and of *chuddur penk*, but even there seemed to me—admittedly my enquiries were superficial—to have no such vital interest in these things as a typical Raj-Gond or Dhurve Gond. This would be explicable on a theory that this god-grouping was something gradually imposed, not necessarily deliberately, but by infiltration and imitation, by the Gonds of the ruling house of Chanda and the aristocratic Gond zamindars, under the feudal system grouped about the Chanda Maharaja, upon the whole 'Maria' substratum of the Gonds of Chanda. The Marias probably represent one or two early waves of Gond migration southwards or, at least the Hill Marias, an earlier pre-Gond race with Veddid, Malid or Munda affinities.[1] There are differences between Chanda Hill Maria and plains Maria speech, the former being as guttural as Bastar Hill Maria; but all Chand Marias speak a form of Gondi very different from the Gondi of the Raj and Dhruve Gonds of Chanda, which would support the view that the latter represent different waves of migration, later moreover in view of their very advanced social and political organization and their aristocratic elements: compare also the position of the Pardhan bards and musicians in Raj-Gond life with their rarity in Maria villages. It is probable also that the ancestors of many who now are called Raj-Gonds a few generations back were Maria. The *Gazetteer*[2] mentions that though Marias do not now (1909) intermarry with Raj-Gonds, the records of the Ahiri family show that they once did so. The very term Raj-Gond in my view, as expressed on page 36, arose from the process still common whereby as sections of aboriginal tribes became Hindnized or acquired political power they distinguish themselves from the main body of their original tribe, so as to fit into the caste system. There can be little doubt that as the Raj-Gond kingdom of Chanda grew in power leading local Gond or Maria headmen or elders who fitted into the social organization of the kingdom came to be regarded as Raj-Gond: compare also the discussion earlier in this Note[3] of the meaning of the term 'Maria' and its disappearance in Drug district terminology in very recent times.[4] What, therefore, could be more

[1] Comparable with, for example, the Kolams of Hyderabad and Berar, or the Hill Reddis of Hyderabad, Madras and Orissa. The late Bishop Wood on hearing Bastar Marias talk said that to him it sounded like Gondi spoken with Mundari accent and intonation. See also R. C. Roy on pp. 317-18

[2] *Chanda District Gazetteer* (Allahabad, 1909) p. 101

[3] P. 377.

[4] P. 378.

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria
Bison Horn Maria

natural than for the backward Marias aspiring to raise themselves to Raj-Gond status to copy gradually the Raj-Gond social organization? It is equally possible that *pari passu* the Raj-Gond ruler and nobles encouraged this: in all these semi-feudal, semi-tribal states and sub-states, as to this day in the States and zamindaris of Chhattisgarh and Orissa, the Maharajah of the State or the Rajah of the zamindari remains the final arbiter in caste matters, even often conferring the right to wear the sacred thread on communities actively hinduizing themselves. At Surjagarh and Jarawandi camps, various *Sendhias* and headmen practically admitted to me that god-grouping was not originally a Maria institution.[1]

From Lahiri there was a long climb of thirteen miles to the Hill Maria village of Kuvakodi, when we halted for four days, including Christmas Day. The track led at first up the valley of the Lahiri river, then up the side valley of a small tributary, and so by an exceptionally steep ascent on to an undulating plateau, across which we reached Kuvakodi at dusk, our camp equipment all being carried on poles by Marias, whom on arrival we rewarded not only in cash but, in Bastar fashion, with salt and beads, and a feast of pork: the Marias sat ranged by clan and village, and those who killed and cooked the pork distributed to every man and child, and to the women of Kuvakodi, a portion of the meat off each joint of the pig. On the way up a slight detour took us through the small village of Gudumundi, and from Kuvakodi we visited Podewara and the Bastar village of Nelangari, some five miles from our camp.

Each day started with a parade of yaws patients for inoculation, all from Chanda villages: the Bastar Marias, who came in to see me and to join in the dancing each evening, looked tolerantly on, having themselves long before had the benefit of the Bastar anti-yaws parties.

The whole cultivation system of the Chanda Hill Marias is identical with the Bastar system described in Chapter VII of this book: it is, that is to say, *penda* cultivation and not what is generally known in the Central Provinces as *dahi*, or its Chanda plains variations of *bhamori*, *jalapod*, *podu* or *sampod* (these terms will be explained later in this Note). There is the same broadcast sowing on the same kind of clearings of seed of all the minor millets and beans. The

[1] Haimendorf in reviewing Shamrao Hivale's *The Pardhans of the Upper Narbada Valley* has pointed out that the fact that the Pardhans' clan organization is everywhere based on that of the local Gond, does not disprove the different origin of the two peoples, for there are many examples of other tribes adopting their Gond neighbours' system of phratries and clans. He instances from Chanda district and Hyderabad State not only the aboriginal castes as certain Maratha blacksmiths and brass-workers who have the same clan names as the Gonds, *Man in India*, Vol. XXVI, 1946, p. 231. Compare also the Kuruk fishing tribe in Bastar, pp. 163-4.

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
Muria

142 epicanthic fold were found in one or both eyes. Among the Hill Muria observed at Markabera, light brown skin colour, high cheek bones and the unmistakable presence of the epicanthic fold were also noticed.

144 'Taking all the characters together, I am inclined to the view that the Muria are not different from the Bhil of the Vindhyan ranges measured by me and belong essentially to what we have termed the Proto-Australoid group. While this is really the basic-type, it is possible that they have absorbed a little of the blood of a finer racial type (as a result probably of their contact with higher caste Hindus across the Godavari) as shown in the occasional occurrences of a longish face, thin lips, prominent chin and well-developed prominent nose. In addition there is unmistakably a Mongoloid element, though very small, and it appears to be more marked in the Hill Maria and the Muria of the foothills than the Muria of the plains. How exactly this has to be accounted for, remains to be seen but I am inclined to agree with Hutton that the intrusion probably came from the eastern coastal regions.'

V. Muria Migrations

● 174 As we have seen, there are probably at least three different elements in the composition of the Muria tribe. The first is the Hill Maria migration from the mountains into the hills and forests of the south and east, from which has emerged the Jhoria of today. The second is a probable migration of Gond from the Central Provinces into the northern parganas, to which testify common traditions, the legend of Lingo and the continued intermarriage between Kanker Gond and Bastar Muria. The third element is that of east Kondagaon, which may represent the true Bastar autochthon, where the Muria —having been longer in the country than the others—have lost more of their original customs and language.

173 All three elements have traditions of migrations from Warangal in the south and Lanji-Dhamda in the north. Many try to blend the two.

Warangal is, of course, the original home of the ruling family of Bastar, whose ancestors reigned there from about A.D. 1150 to 1425. This Kakatiya family was probably originally feudatory to the Chalukya kings and only later ruled independently. 'Pratap Rudra, the greatest and the last independent Kakatiya king of Warangal, lost his life and independence in battle with the Mohammedan invaders of the Deccan under Ahmad Shah Bahmani early in the fifteenth century and, according to Bastar tradition and folk-song, his brother Annam Deo fled across the Godavari into Bastar, which had been an outlying and loosely-held group of feudal dependencies of Warangal.'[1]

It will be of interest to give a few of the stories still current in Muria villages. Suko Manjhi told me at Bandopal that his family first lived in Lanji-Dhamda and then went to Warangal. In Warangal, he went on,

> The Raja was one day going to court when Danteshwari Mai appeared to him in a vision saying, 'Where are you going?' The Raja replied, 'To my court'. The goddess said, 'This is not your court, nor your kingdom. I will show you where your real kingdom is; if you stay here both house and kingdom will be lost. Come with me; you go ahead and I will follow, but do not look behind; your kingdom will extend as far as you can go!' The Raja went on and on into Bastar and up as far as the Pairi river where there is now the Kanker boundary. As he went along he listened all the time to the sound of Danteshwari

[1] Grigson, op. cit., p. 3.

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
Muria

The similarity between this description and the account which I have just given of the witch hunt at Palki is very striking. The dead are generally believed to communicate their desires to mankind and to give them instruction about the ordering of their lives. The dead are, of course, specially connected with the clan and its continuity. It is not altogether impossible that out of a cult of the Departed, where in former days the bier was used more than at present for divination and to express the will of the gods, there gradually developed the custom of substituting some symbol for the corpse and at last the 'Anga' for the bier.

This suggestion gets some support from a dream seen by a Bison-horn Maria convict shortly before the fatal quarrel which led to murder and his imprisonment. He dreamt of an Anga, a drum and a village-trumpet. The Anga, he said, stood for the corpse of the murdered man being taken out for burial and the drum and trumpet suggested the funeral. The Anga, he admitted, clearly foreshadowed his terrible deed had he only had the wit to understand it.[1]

It is just possible, of course, that the clan-god takes its name from the land of Anga, a great kingdom—one of the chief sixteen—of ancient India, which has been identified with the present district of Bhagalpur and part of the Santal Parganas. Its boundaries are uncertain and may have also included the districts of Birbhum, Murshidabad and Manbhum.[2] At the time of the *Atharva Veda*, the inhabitants were known as Anga and 'the contemptuous way they were mentioned suggests these were aboriginals'.[3] A connexion between the Muria and Bihar is not impossible and is suggested by many cultural similarities, but I have not found anything resembling the Bastar clan-god in the ethnographic records of Bihar.

V. Muria Temples

Mān ta pen nahi ta pāthar.—If you believe, it is a god; if not, it is a stone.—Muria saying.

J. D. Unwin defined a temple as a 'roofed building other than a grave-house, in which the power in the universe manifests itself and which is specially erected and maintained in order that a right relation may be preserved with that power, the building being such that a man can stand upright inside it'.[4] On this definition the Muria build temples and are in Unwin's 'deistic stage' of culture—a stage which, according to Unwin, is only achieved by those peoples which forbid pre-nuptial intercourse. The Muria provide a striking exception to Unwin's general theory and throw some light upon it.

In a few Muria villages there are no temples. In Almer there is nothing but a few stone seats under saja trees, where the Village Mother is worshipped and the New Eating ceremonies performed. In Kajen the Village Mother forbade the erection of any shrines. But in most villages there are several buildings that fulfil the above definition of a temple. Sometimes these are scattered about the village, one put in the jungle, another in someone's field, a third actually in the compound of a house. In other villages, as for example in Bayanar and Adwer, the shrines are all together in one spot where the divine power manifests itself. In Kabonga, the shrines looked like a little village.

[1] See *Maria Murder and Suicide*, p. 213.
[2] Dey, op. cit., p. 318.
[3] Ibid., p. 344.
[4] J. D. Unwin, *Sex and Culture* (London, 1934), p. 14.

4: Führer-Haimendorf E-5 (1942-1945) 1948
AW32 Gond AW32

our approach to the Gond problem—one of the cardinal problems of Deccan ethnology—unless we envisage the possibility that the tribes now known as Gonds, far from being the dispersed off-shoots of a once homogeneous people, attained a certain and very limited measure of cultural uniformity only when they came under the sway of the same dominant linguistic influence.

Gondi with its many local dialects is a Dravidian language of the so-called intermediate group, and stands, according to Grierson, closer to Tamil and Kanarese than to Telugu. But it seems highly improbable that the Dravidian tongues, which were no doubt associated with the representatives of the pre-Aryan high-civilizations of Southern India, should have been the original languages of tribal populations as primitive in racial and cultural make-up as the Hill Marias of Bastar and certain Koyas of Hyderabad. Just as such widely separated aboriginal tribes as the Chenchus of the Nallamallai Hills, the Hill Reddis of the Eastern Ghats and some, though not all, Naikpods and Kolams in the hills of Adilabad have adopted Telugu to the exclusion of any other tongue, without anyone considering Telugu as their original language[1] or claiming the present linguistic uniformity as proof of a genetic connection between all those tribes, so the peoples now speaking Gondi may, in times past, have abandoned older tribal tongues in favour of a Dravidian language spoken by neighbouring populations or the members of a ruling class. J. H. Hutton believes that by a similar process the Oraons of Chota Nagpur have adopted their present Dravidian tongue[2] in place of a Munda language, and I fully agree with his assumption that a large-scale Dravidianization of aboriginal tribes occurred partly previous and partly parallel to the Aryanization of which we are still witnesses.[3]

The idea that Dravidian Gondi represents a comparatively recent element in the linguistic pattern of the Central Indian belt has already been voiced by R. V. Russell, who put forward the theory of a Gond incursion into the Central Provinces from the south between the ninth and the thirteenth century A.D. This probably goes too far and is not supported by ethnological evidence; in solving the language problem it is not even necessary to assume a wholesale migration of all the Gond tribes from Dravidian lands south of the Godavari to the Central Provinces and the hill-tracts of Bastar. It is sufficient to postulate the invasion of a people limited in numbers but superior to the older tribal folks in organization and material equipment, and the subsequent spread of its Dravidian language and perhaps certain elements of its culture among the tribes previously speaking one or several older tongues. Indian history provides numerous examples of such an imposition of a foreign

1. In the case of Naikpods and Kolams an older tribal language is still spoken by other groups.
2. Oraon belongs to the same intermediate group as Gondi.
3. *Census of India*, 1931, Vol. I, Part I, p. 358.

4: Fürer-Haimendorf E-5 (1942-1945) 1948
AW32 Gond AW32

language on aboriginal populations, and it seems more probable that such tribes as the Muria Gonds, with their close cultural and racial affinities to the Austroasiatic Gadabas of Orissa, were subject to a change of language than that they immigrated from distant parts of Southern India.

We are not yet in a position to surmise which population may have been responsible for the spread of Gondi or which pre-Dravidian languages Gondi may have replaced. Both questions will perhaps remain for ever unanswered, but linguistic research among the Gondi speaking peoples, the still entirely mysterious Khonds, and the neighbouring Austroasiatic tribes may still lead to surprising results. Since the days of Grierson's Linguistic Survey few trained linguists have done fieldwork among the tribal populations of Peninsular India, and the most admirable descriptive works of amateurs cannot compensate for the absence of comparative studies by experts.[1]

The replacement of an older language by one of more recent introduction, is an accomplished fact among many of the eastern and northern Gonds, who speak now the Chhattisgarhi dialect of Hindi and various other local dialects. But there can be no doubt that these Aryan languages were adopted from neighbouring Hindu populations instead of tribal tongues, and certain place-names are to-day the only evidence that the languages previously spoken were related to the Gondi spoken by other sections of the Gond family.

According to the Census of India the total number of Gonds in 1931[2] was 3,063,753. With their strong tribal consciousness they are the premier aboriginal race of India, exceeding by more than one million the number of Bhils and dwarfing such tribes as Oraons, Mundas, Hos and Santals.

The majority of Gonds—2,261,138 in 1931—are found in the Central Provinces and Berar, which contain practically all the territories known to the early Moghul writers as Gondwana. Except for Buldana in the extreme south-west, there is no district in the Central Provinces

1. The limited value of linguistic material contained in the writings of anthropologists is to some more obvious than to the authors; such texts, for instance, as given in this volume may facilitate the linguist's approach to an unwritten language, but they are insufficient as a basis for linguistic conclusions. For very relevant phonetic peculiarities may entirely escape the attention of the untrained observer, or defeat his attempts at recording them. In linguistics as in anthropology there is no substitute for field work. The dearth of authoritative works on the tribal languages of India was lamented by J. H. Hutton in his Census report: "There is, however, a serious void in our knowledge in that no intensive work appears to have been done on the tribal dialects of southern India, so that it is impossible to say whether the Munda language ever penetrated to the extreme south of India or not. The linguistic survey unfortunately did not include southern India in its scope, and there is therefore a crying need for an intensive study of the dialects spoken by such tribes as the Kadar, Kurumans, Paliyans, Panians and Thanda Pulayans, with the object of discovering whether or no any Munda survivals are to be found." (Op. cit., p. 158). Hutton's call to linguists has, to my knowledge, remained largely unheeded. M. B. Emeneau who worked among the Todas being a laudable exception. But equally urgent as the study of the tribal dialects of South India is intensive work on the tribal language of the Central belt.

2. No later figures for individual tribes are available, the Census operations of 1941 having been curtailed for reasons of economy.

4: Fürer-Haimendorf E-5 (1942-1945) 1948
AW32 Gond AW32

101 without a considerable Gond population, but the main strongholds of
162 the Gonds are to-day the Satpura plateau including the districts of Betul,
197 Chhindwara and Seoni, where the western type of Gondi is spoken, Mandla and Chhattisgarh in the east, where the Gonds have adopted the local dialect of eastern Hindi but retained their tribal identity, and in the south Chanda and the neighbouring Yeotmal, where the language is Gondi, but of a dialect somewhat different from the Gondi of Betul.

101 To the north-west the Gonds extend across the Narbada River into
691 Central India, and are particularly numerous in Indore State; to the
197 east of the Central Provinces lie the states of Gond princes, such as
[619] Kawardha, Sakti, Raigarh and Sarangarh, to-day known as the Chhattisgarh States. Although neither these Gond rajas, nor indeed the Gonds among their subjects speak Gondi, they are fully conscious of their tribal associations and the high status of the ruling princes adds no doubt to tribal prestige in the whole of Chhattisgarh.

Further south, bordering on Chanda, Drug and Raipur, extend the two States of Kanker and Bastar, where Gonds constitute the majority of the population. Bastar in particular is the home of three important groups of Gonds: the Murias, the Hill Marias and the Bisonhorn Marias, all of which differ in language and custom very considerably from the Gonds of the Central Provinces.[1] Their colourful and complex cul-
● [174] tures are representative of ancient aboriginal India and show obvious affinities with the Austroasiatic cultures of Orissa and Chota Nagpur. Bastar has also part in the Koyas or Dorlas of the Godavari area, the most southern branch of the Gond family occurring in considerable strength in Madras Presidency and Hyderabad State and stretching across the barrier of the Eastern Ghats into the vicinity of Rajahmundry. Most Koyas still speak a dialect of Gondi, but those surrounded by Telugu populations, have changed over to Telugu.

Another substantial group of Gonds, closely akin to the Gonds of Yeotmal and Chanda, is found in the hilly country between the Godavari and the Penganga Rivers constituting the Adilabad District of H.E.H. the Nizam's Dominions, and it is these Gonds who form the subject of the present work.

101 All the Gonds of Adilabad, except for an insignificant overflow of
186 Dhurwe Gonds from Chanda, consider themselves Raj Gonds, and this brings us to the still somewhat problematic division between Raj Gonds and Dhur or Dhurwe Gonds, which runs through the greater part of the Gond population within the Central Provinces. There seems to be no uniformity in the principles ruling this division; in Chhattisgarh only the members of ruling or formerly ruling families are described as Raj Gond, while in other parts most of the land-holding Gonds aspire to this denomination. In recent times the name Raj Gond has also been
[68] claimed by certain Gonds who have tried to raise their social status by

1. The Hill Murias extend into the hills of the neighbouring Chanda District.

4: Fürer-Haimendorf E-5 (1942-1945) 1948
AW32 Gond AW32

compliance with Hindu customs, and "Raj-Gond" reform movements have made their appearance in the Central Provinces.

Various theories have been advanced to explain the distinction between Raj Gonds and the other sections of the Gond peoples. C. B. Lucie-Smith writing of the Raj Gonds of Chanda suggested that either "the epithet Raj was originally applied to royal and noble Gond families, from which the distinction spread to their followers and the governing class generally; or it may describe the leading Gond tribe which in ancient days conquered the land from other aboriginal clans."[1] But Captain Forsyth believed that Raj Gonds are in many cases the descendants of alliances between Rajput adventurers and Gonds, and R. V. Russell quotes this view with qualified approval.[2]

W. V. Grigson on the other hand lays emphasis rather on the social than the historical causes for the distinction and suggests that such names as Raj Gond arose from "the tendency, familiar throughout India, of local groups of primitive races which are gradually being Hinduized to regard themselves and to be accepted by their Hindu neighbours as separate Hindu castes under new names."[3] The situation in Adilabad seems rather to accord with the second suggestion advanced by Lucie-Smith; for here the Raj Gonds do not form a ruling class or even a class of privileged economic status, but an entire tribal group comprising all strata of society from the feudal chiefs down to the poorest labourer. We will see in a later chapter that the once powerful Gond Kings of Chanda belonged to this group, and their kinsmen in the Adilabad hills were as early as the 17th century referred to as Raj Gonds in patents of the Emperor Aurangzeb.

Here the Raj Gonds, far from aspiring to inclusion in the Hindu fold, consider themselves the true exponents of Gond culture and Gond language, and above all of the traditional Gond religion which involves the sacrifice of cows at the rites for the clan-gods. Many of them have never met a Dhurwe Gond, but those who have come in contact with the few groups of Dhurwe Gonds who have recently drifted across the Chanda border, look down upon them as speaking a corrupt form of Gondi intermixed with much Marathi, and as following different customs; somewhat sweepingly and apparently unjustly they assert that the Dhurwe Gonds have no cult of clan deities "only worshipping Bhimana like Kolams."

It seems indeed that the Raj Gonds of Adilabad, who have lived for almost a century and a half under Muslim rule, and have in consequence been less exposed to the influence of the more intolerant exponents of Hinduism, have retained more of their old culture than

1. *Report of the Land Revenue Settlement of the Chanda District. Central Provinces.* 1869, Nagpur 1870, p. 46.
2. *The Tribes and Castes of the Central Provinces of India.* London 1916. Vol. III. p. 63.
3. W. V. Grigson. *The Maria Gonds of Bastar.* London. 1938 p. 36.

4: Fürer-Haimendorf E-5 (1942-1945) 1948
AW32 Gond AW32

most of their tribesmen in the Central Provinces.

In order to understand the historical position of the Gonds both in Hyderabad and in the Central Provinces we must briefly review the course of political events during the last five centuries, and in doing so, anticipate, the fuller discussion of historical developments contained in Book II.

Reliable information on the early history of the Gonds is scarce and not until Muslim times do Gond states figure in contemporary chronicles and the works of historians. There can indeed be little doubt that throughout ancient and mediæval times the larger part of the Gond country east of Berar remained a land of vast forests and poor communications. Few foreign travellers seem to have traversed it and the old literature contains but the scantiest references to its inhabitants. Yet, its 'wildness' should not be exaggerated. Buddhist relics have been found in various places and it is not unlikely that there were times when pioneers of advanced civilizations settled among the aboriginal tribesmen just as there were periods when such outposts of higher culture shrank into insignificance. In Chanda District, for instance, Bhandak near the Wardha River seems to have been a centre of Buddhism and various authorities identify this place with the old Kosala capital visited in the seventh century by Hiuen Tsiang.[1] In Bhandak has also been discovered an inscription of the Rashtrakuta King, Krishna I, the builder of the Kailasa Temple at Ellora, dealing with the grant of a village when the King was camping in Yeotmal.[2] From Buddhist times date also the Pandrolena cave-temples at Mahur in the westernmost corner of the Adilabad District, and the famous Dev Deshwar temple at Mahur—mentioned in the Garur Purana and for the last seven centuries under the guardianship of monks of the Mahanubhau sect—proves that Mahur, formerly known as Matapur, retained its importance into Hindu times.

From inscriptions and old coins we know moreover that from the 9th century A.D. onwards Rajput princes were established in various parts of the Central Provinces. Tripuri, the heart of the later Gond Kingdom of Garha-Mandla, and Chhattisgarh, for instance, were for centuries ruled by the Rajput dynasty of Haihaiya bansi. Although further archæological finds may gradually add to our knowledge of the colonies founded by such Rajput chieftains, little elucidation of the early fortunes of its Gond population can be expected from that side.

We must therefore turn to the early Muslim writers who, from the 14th century on, comment in their chroniclts on campaign and political developments in the territories described by them as Gond-

1. S. Beal, *Buddhist Records of the Western World*, London 1906, Vol. II, pp. 209, 214.—R. B. Hira Lal, 'Prehistoric Berar,' *Sharadashram-Varshik*, Vol. I, Yeotmal, 1933, pp. 2, 3.

2. Hiralal Jain, 'Materials for Historic Research in Berar,' *Sharadashram Varshik*, Vol. I, p. 12.